

FROM FIELD AND STUDY

Rose-crowned Fruit-dove on Maret Island – a new location and food source – The Rose-crowned Fruit-dove *Ptilinopus regina* distribution lies along the Kimberley coast and a number of off shore islands between Broome and the Drysdale River. On 10 August 2005, while carrying out a bird survey back from a large sandy bay on Maret Island-north an unusually large number of Rose-crowned Fruit-doves, previously unrecorded on the island, were observed feeding on the fruits of *Scaevola taccada* and *Pittosporum moluccanum*. Neither of these two food sources have been recorded in Johnstone, R.E. and Storr, G.M. 1998. *Handbook of Western Australian Birds*. Vol. 1. Western Australian Museum, Perth.

Scaevola taccada is a pantropical species often recorded on oceanic islands and behind the strand line of sandy beaches (Kenneally, K. Choules Edinger, D. Willing, T. 1996. *Broome and Beyond*). At the time of my visit the shrubs, located in low dunes up from a sandy beach, were full of fruit and still flowering. There were up to fifteen Rose-crowned-Fruit-doves clustered in three shrubs, about three metres in height, feeding on the fruit.

Pittosporum moluccanum is currently listed as Priority 4 flora by the Department of Conservation and Land Management and is known from several other places in the

Kimberley (Kenneally *et al.* 1996). On the western side of Maret Island-north it grows to a height of three to four metres, in dunes in close proximity to *Scaevola taccada*. On the edge of vine thicket back from the fore dunes there are some trees up to five metres in height. At the time of my visit many seed capsules had opened exposing sticky seeds, and about five other Rose-crowned Fruit-doves were feeding on them, making the total of about twenty birds.

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Additional breeding information for Fairy Tern on the Houtman Abrolhos Islands – Fairy Tern *Sterna nereis* are widespread along the Western Australian coast, from the Dampier Archipelago south to Israelite Bay. Johnstone and Storr in the *Handbook of Western Australian Birds Volume 1* give their breeding times in the Pilbara and Gascoyne as July to September, and further south as late October to mid-February. Surman 1998 (Seabird breeding schedules at the Pelsaert group of islands, Houtman Abrolhos, Western Australia, *Records of the Western Australian Museum* 19: 209–215) records them as breeding until mid February at the Abrolhos Islands.

During a bird survey at the Houtman Abrolhos Islands with *Landscape Expeditions*, during late

February and early March of 2005, Fairy Terns were found to be still breeding. This may warrant a review of the breeding schedule for this bird at the Houtman Abrolhos Islands to late February – early March.

On 2 March 2005 at the north end of Pelsaert Island (28°54'13"S 114°00'11"E) we found a colony of 30–35 Fairy Terns nesting with freshly laid eggs, on coral shingle.

On 1 March 2005 on Wooded Island (28°45'05"S 113°48'15"E) a colony of about 30 Fairy Terns were nesting with eggs and newly hatched young, on sand and coral shingle.

On 28 February 2005 on Serventy Island, adult birds were observed carrying fish to young hidden amongst coral shingle.

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Extension of the known geographic range of the Princess Parrot: a record from Eucla, 1872 – Storr (1986, pp 25–26) summarized the known southern limits of the Princess Parrot *Polytelis alexandrae* in Western Australia as Carlisle Lakes and Queen Victoria Spring. This is shown on the distribution map published by Johnstone and Storr (1998, p 294).

A detailed description of parrots seen in 1872 in the vicinity of Eucla fits this species and no other.

John Muir commenced pastoral activities at Eucla, landing sheep

there in March 1872. He kept a diary, parts of which were recently published (Muir 2005). In March and April 1872 he recorded a detailed description of a species of parrot that was new to him. Muir had arrived in WA as a seven year old in 1844 and lived at Cape Riche and Forest Hill, well outside the range of the Princess Parrot.

His descriptions are as follows:

- 'a red-beaked parrot' was shot (letter dated 10.3.1872, published in Muir 2005, p 152);
- 'shot a parrot never saw one like it before, blue head and wings and a dirtish green on the back and red underside of the tail. It had all the colours of the rainbow' (letter dated 28.4.1872, published in Muir 2005, p 154).

These records extend the known range of the Princess Parrot c. 330 km south-east of Carlisle Lakes and c. 540 km south-east of Queen Victoria Spring.

Other early travellers made no explicit record of this species. However, c. 40 miles west of Eucla, Edward Eyre in March 1841 noted that he 'met with several flights of a very large description of parrot, quite unknown to me, coming apparently from the north-east, and settling among the shrubs and bushes around. They had evidently come to eat the fruit growing behind the sand-hills...' (Eyre 1845 vol. 1, p 344). This record probably refers to the Princess Parrot. Although Eyre had previously explored